

Abundant *life*

FALL 2017

LET'S WALK THIS ROAD TOGETHER

In 1989, newlyweds Sue and Jerry Minton were a young, vibrant couple, each with successful careers surrounded by friends and family. They were living the dream.

Their lives changed dramatically, however, in February 2012 when Sue was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease at the age of just 54.

"The diagnosis caught me very much by surprise," Jerry said. "But looking back, there were some signs that she was having difficulty," he said, including problems at work, personality changes, increased dependency and driving difficulties.

"Sue has always been very bright," he continued. "So this diagnosis at a young age is hard to understand." Growing up, he said, Sue could play the piano, guitar, many wind instruments and she was also conversational in French and could speak some Russian.

Just a few months after her Alzheimer's diagnosis, Sue's doctors discovered small lymphocystic lymphoma and associated leukemia, as part of a routine physical.

"Again, we were not expecting this news, but the blessing is that Sue's

Alzheimer's prevents her from comprehending, or maybe even remembering that she has cancer."

Over the next few years, Sue's Alzheimer's symptoms continued to progress, and Jerry had to take on an increasingly active role in her caregiving at their home. "I was just doing what anyone would do to care for their loved one," he said, "but there were times when it was definitely difficult. The most important thing that I learned through this process is that my priority is to make her feel loved and secure."

In October, 2015, Sue was admitted to the hospital with a burst appendix. Upon her release, her Alzheimer's symptoms were much more intense. "The acceleration of her symptoms was very dramatic after her appendix burst," Jerry said. "Caretaking at home became overwhelming and very

Sue Minton, playing one of her favorite songs "Puff the Magic Dragon" for her husband, Jerry.

frustrating," he admitted, even though he had help from his sister and other caretakers.

"Of course my frustrations were never with Sue," he said, "but with the Alzheimer's that was causing symptoms and behaviors that were out of my control. Caring for her at home was just no longer manageable."

Jerry considered the possibility that Sue was no longer able to stay at home – that her Alzheimer's and its associated symptoms were more than

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An expanded edition of the **Abundant Life**® newsletter is available on our website at www.lutheranseniorelife.org/abundant-life/newsletter

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OUR MISSION

On behalf of our Moral Owners,* Lutheran SeniorLife serves elders in our three synod region, intending that the recipients of these services will experience a more **Abundant Life**® regardless of their physical condition or financial circumstances.

*SWPA Synod, NWPA Synod,
WVA-WMD Synod

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is with honor that I have the opportunity to share an alliance of common ministry and fellowship with colleagues George Trauner, CEO of Bethesda Lutheran Service; The Rev. Charles Lockwood, CEO Glade Run Lutheran Services; and the Rev. Kurt F. Kusserow, Bishop of the Southwest PA Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We routinely gather together to share and envision new ideas for the future – always affirming our commitment to serve as we are called to do God’s work in an ever-changing world.

Our three social ministry organizations of the ELCA provide a diverse and wide array of services throughout all of western Pennsylvania – from adoption and foster care, to children and youth services, to senior living and hospice care provided through the caring nurses at VNA (Visiting Nurses Association of western PA). When residents of our neighboring communities are facing a crisis in life or simply want to live more abundantly, Lutheran social ministry organizations such as ours will answer the call.

My colleagues are supportive and insightful as we learn from one another. A recent name change at Bethesda Lutheran Service or plans for new programs at Glade Run are just a few examples of where new seeds will be planted to continue our invaluable missions that began well over 100 years ago for all three organizations.

We are privileged to also be members of Lutheran Services in America (LSA). In partnership with the church and our colleagues throughout the country and the Caribbean, LSA organizations serve one in 50 Americans. Here in Pennsylvania, we stand ready for today and are positioned to serve well into the future in our local communities.



David Fenoglietto,

President and Chief Executive Officer, Lutheran SeniorLife



(L to R) The Rev. Kurt Kusserow, Bishop of the Southwest PA Synod; The Rev. Charles T. Lockwood, EdD, Glade Run Lutheran Services President/CEO; George Trauner, chief executive officer, Bethesda Lutheran Services; David Fenoglietto, president and CEO, Lutheran SeniorLife.

LIFE PROGRAMS OPEN NEW SMALL HOMES

The LIFE Programs have expanded their Small Homes initiative with the opening of a new duplex unit on Chestnut Street in Butler.

Residents of the Small Homes must be LIFE Program participants, and require some assistance to help keep them safe and independent. All of the homes are fully furnished. Expenses, with the exception of rent, are included.

The LIFE Programs also own two Small Homes in Aliquippa (managed through LIFE Beaver County), and three in New Castle (managed through LIFE Lawrence County).

LIFE Butler County participants Carolyn and Walter Mazar have been living in their new Small Home in Butler for a few months, and have been very pleased with their new arrangement. Although they live independently, they receive visits from LIFE Butler County staff four times per day to

receive assistance with things like medication management, bathing, dressing, meal preparation, laundry and shopping.

“The house is beautiful and very easy to get around in,” Carolyn Mazar said. “All of the staff have been so wonderful.” The duplex unit is brand new, and completely handicapped-accessible including large open spaces, hallways and doorways to accommodate wheelchairs or walkers, a walk-in shower and more in a one-level home.

Under the arrangement, the Mazars still receive all of the benefits of their

enrollment in the LIFE Program, and they both continue to visit the LIFE Butler County center for socialization.

“This home is a much better arrangement for them than where they were living before,” said Luella Frain, community care coordinator for LIFE Butler County.

“The philosophy of the LIFE Programs is for participants to be able to age in place in their home and in the community, and these small homes are a way for us to achieve this goal,” said Marla Frailey, director of LIFE Butler County.

Carolyn said that she is tremendously grateful for the opportunity to move from a nursing home, back into a more comfortable space. “We are able to still do most things for ourselves,” she said, “but it’s nice to know that someone is coming to check on us and help us with whatever we need.” ❖



Lutheran SeniorLife manages LIFE Beaver County and LIFE Lawrence County in partnership with Heritage Valley Health System, LIFE Butler County in partnership with Butler Health System and LIFE Armstrong County in partnership with ACMH Hospital.

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he was qualified to handle on his own. It was an emotionally difficult decision to make, he said, but a necessary one just the same. Within a matter of weeks, he moved Sue into RoseCrest on the St. John Community campus in Mars.

“After talking at length with Mr. Minton, I was able to understand the issues he was facing with caring for Mrs. Minton in their home,” said Claudia McIntyre, director of residential living at RoseCrest. “We became partners, and together with the RoseCrest staff, we developed

strategies that would not only meet Mrs. Minton’s basic care needs, but would also help provide resident-centered care that promotes her quality of life.”

“I felt comfortable here right away,” he said. “It was obvious that the staff really understands what it’s like to live with dementia and they treat Sue the way I would treat her.”

With the staff at RoseCrest handling Sue’s physical needs, Jerry said he visits her almost every day to provide emotional support for Sue,

as she continues to struggle with the symptoms of her Alzheimer’s disease.

“She still recognizes me—maybe not as her husband, but as a familiar face, and I think that brings her comfort. She is still able to play the piano occasionally. She doesn’t always play the right notes, but that doesn’t matter. In her mind she plays beautifully, and she is happy. Through all of this I have learned to find blessings in the little things and to focus on what remains, not what has been lost.” ❖

Lutheran SeniorLife

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www.lutheranseniorlife.org

Lutheran SeniorLife offers a continuum of care featuring senior living communities, personal care, nursing care, Alzheimer's care, home health and hospice, social and physician services.

With headquarters in Adams Township, PA, Lutheran SeniorLife has locations in Zelienople, Mars, Butler, McCandless Township, Hempfield Township, Kittanning, Vandergrift, New Castle, Moon Township, Aliquippa, Ambridge and Monaca. To learn more about any of our programs or services, please visit our website at www.lutheranseniorlife.org.

BISHOPS TO BE HONORED AT GALA

Please join us Friday, April 27, 2018 to honor Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow of the Southwestern PA Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Bishop David A. Zubik of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh at the Excellence is Ageless Gala at Heinz Field.

While each bishop was selected to receive the Excellence is Ageless Award for his own outstanding support of seniors in southwestern Pennsylvania, we are recognizing them together in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

"We are truly blessed for the opportunity to honor Bishop Kusserow and Bishop Zubik together at the 2018 Excellence is Ageless Gala. This is the 15th year that we have been holding this annual event to raise funds for benevolent care, and we could not be more proud to honor the Bishops who have both dedicated themselves to helping others live a more **Abundant Life**," said Jane Bittcher, president of the Lutheran SeniorLife Foundation.

Additional details about the Excellence is Ageless Gala will be available in the coming months. ❖



The Rev. Kurt F. Kusserow

(L) The Most Rev. David A. Zubik